

THE UNIVERSITY

2004-05 Western Carolina University Basketball Media Guide





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Founded in 1889, Western Carolina University is one of 16 senior public institutions of The University of North Carolina. A comprehensive university offering a broad array of undergraduate and graduate programs, Western Carolina is recognized as a national leader in the application of computer technology in education.



Western attracts students from across North Carolina and the United States, and from around the world, yet the university holds a special sense of responsibility for the people of Western North Carolina. Teaching and learning constitute the central mission of Western. The university seeks to create a community of scholarship in which the activities of its members are consistent with the highest standards of knowledge and practice in their disciplines. As a major public resource for the region, the university assists individuals and agencies through the expertise of its students, faculty and staff.

The 265-acre campus is located in the community of Cullowhee, N.C., in a picturesque valley of the Tuckaseegee River between the Blue Ridge and Great Smoky mountain ranges, 52 miles west of Asheville. The university lies close to Great Smoky Mountains National Park, the Blue Ridge Parkway, and some of the nation's most beautiful national forest lands.

The university's academic structure is composed of four undergraduate colleges — Applied Sciences, Arts and Sciences, Business, and Education and Allied Professions — and the Honors College and Graduate School. The Honors College, a community of high-achieving students, is the first of its kind in North Carolina, with accepted students invited to live in one of two honors residences.



Undergraduate students who enroll at Western may choose from more than 120 majors and areas of concentration. Students interested in careers in engineering, law, medicine, dentistry, optometry, veterinary medicine and pharmacy may enroll in pre-professional programs.

Through the Graduate School, the university offers graduate degree programs leading to the Master of Accountancy, Master of Arts, Master of Arts in Education, Master of Arts in Teaching, Master of Business Administration, Master of Health Sciences, Master of Physical Therapy, Master of Project Management, Master of Public Affairs, Master of School Administration, Master of Science, Master of Science in Nursing, the Education Specialist in Educational Leadership, and the Doctor of Education.

Western's rigorous academic program is led by a full-time faculty of about 335, providing a student-faculty

ratio of 15 to 1 for the student body of about 7,500 students. The university also operates resident-credit centers in Asheville and Cherokee. Through credit and noncredit instructional courses, continuing education offerings, and workshop, conference and service programs, the university serves nearly 12,000 people each year.

Western has the distinction of being the first fully networked campus in The University of North Carolina system, and has received widespread acclaim for being on the national cutting edge in the use of computer technology in education. In fall of 1998, WCU became the first public university in North Carolina, and one of the first six public universities nationwide, to require freshmen students to come to campus with personal computers.

Two computer ports in each residence hall room allow students to connect to the Internet and university computer system from the comfort of their rooms. The use of 13 multimedia electronic classrooms on campus puts WCU at the forefront of educational technology. Western has twice been named one of the nation's 100 "most-wired" university campuses by a leading computer magazine.

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Also, in spring of 2000, WCU was officially designated a National Merit

university, and now is one of only five institutions of higher education in North Carolina, public or private, to receive that distinction.

WCU faculty members and students participate in a wide range of service and research activities. The university's service centers add impetus to the programs of the colleges and departments and provide significant assistance to the region. Some of those centers include the Center for Regional Development, which maintains a special emphasis on rural economic development; the Mountain Heritage Center, which collects, interprets and disseminates knowledge about the southern Appalachian region and its people; the Developmental Evaluation Center, which provides developmental evaluation,

recommendations for services, treatment and guidance for children and their families in seven counties of Western North Carolina and the Cherokee Indian Reservation; and the Office for Rural Education, which helps rural elementary and secondary schools improve the quality of their programs.

Through the Division of Distance and Continuing Education, the instructional resources of the university are made available to the people, businesses, industries, schools, organizations and agencies of the region and state. The division promotes and coordinates all noncredit and extension-credit courses and programs, as well as the university summer sessions and distance learning, and also provides assistance for all academic and supporting units of the university to extend their resources using a variety of telecommunications technologies. Distance learning resources include computer conferencing, video conferencing and correspondence courses.

Western Carolina's Hunter Library, the largest library in North Carolina west of Charlotte, contains more than 600,000 books and bound periodical volumes and provides access to more than 10,000 electronic books. The journal and newspaper collections includes more than 1,200 print subscriptions and 8,000 full text online journals.

The focal point for many activities is the Liston B. Ramsey Regional Activity Center, which seats almost 8,000 people. The largest and most versatile facility of its kind in Western North Carolina, the Ramsey Center has a network of movable curtains and adaptable staging that allows it to convert from a full-scale arena to a large auditorium, or to more intimate areas for meetings.

With voters' approval of a statewide higher education bond package in fall 2000, WCU was launched into a building boom of a magnitude never before seen on the campus. Western's share of the bonds — \$98.4 million — represents the single largest infusion of funds in the university's history. Combined with federal funds and other funds provided through self-liquidating projects, the \$130 million construction boom is

redrawing the campus map as WCU prepares for projected enrollment growth. Cornerstone projects include a fine and performing arts center, a high-tech workforce development center, an addition to the A.K. Hinds University Center, a new residence hall, and new and improved athletics facilities.





UNIVERSITY PROFILE

Location: Cullowhee, N.C.

Character: A regional comprehensive university and member of the 16-institution University of North Carolina system.

Approximate Enrollment:

- Undergraduate: 7,000.
- Graduate: 1,300.
- Total: 8,300.

Academic Programs: More than 120 undergraduate majors and areas of concentration. Graduate degrees in more than 50 areas of study.

Campus: 265 acres of rolling hills in a scenic mountain valley between the Blue Ridge and Great Smoky Mountains.

Calendar: Two semesters.

Faculty: 350.

Student/Faculty ratio: 15 to 1.

Computers: A fully networked campus with 6,000 Internet connections, including two in each residence hall room.

A Growing Campus: Western Carolina University is engaged in a \$130 million building boom that includes a fine and performing arts center, a high-tech center, additional athletics facilities, movie theater and expanded food court.

Western Carolina University is committed to helping its student-athletes both on and off the playing field. WCU treasures its outstanding academic reputation and is equally proud of the tradition of its athletic teams. Realizing the important role that sport plays in the lives of our student-athletes, the Office of Academic Support Services for Student-Athletes, in conjunction with the Office of Academic Advising assist student-athletes with managing their

athletic demands without sacrificing their academic careers. WCU Department of Athletics has always understood the primacy of academics and maintains a close working relationship with both offices of academic support.

The Office of Academic Support Services for Student-Athletes reports to the Athletic Director and is committed to: (1) Ensuring that each student-athlete at WCU continues to make academic progress towards graduation as well as maintaining athletic eligibility. (2) Ensuring that every student-athlete be provided the necessary resources needed to be academically successful. (3) Striving to assist each student-athlete with reaching their fullest potential as young adults in achieving their career and life goals. The Academic Support Services staff is responsible for monitoring the academic progress and class attendance of all student-athletes and coordinating the Academic Enhancement Program.

The Academic Enhancement Program offers academic resources to its student-athletes to give them the best opportunity for continued success in the classroom. All first semester freshmen and transfers and are required to participate in the program. Catamount student-athletes are provided with tutorial services and educational and career workshops.



Kori Hatcher (left) completed his degree in the Spring of 2004. Hatcher, pictured with volleyball player Shari Harder, made 41.5 of his 3-pointers as a senior in 2003, which is sixth on the WCU single-season list.

The Office of Academic Advising is part of a larger academic support program known as the Office of Advising and Retention Services which has a fundamental responsibility for enhancing the educational experience for all students.

All freshmen athletes are advised by the academic advisor for student-athletes through enrollment in USI 130, Academic and Career Planning, a one-hour elective course. Through this course, students learn about WCU academic programs and

policies, NCAA academic regulations, gain a better understanding of the meaning of higher education, learn more about themselves, and make new friends. All student-athletes are advised by the athletic advisor until they formally declare a major.

Exemplifying their commitment to academic excellence, WCU student-athletes have posted a 3.00 cumulative GPA twice since 2000 and having a GPA no lower than 2.74 in one semester over the period. One hundred fifteen WCU student-athletes qualified for the Southern Conference Academic Honor Roll, which honors student-athletes who have participated in at least one sport and have earned a 3.0 or better grade point average during the past academic year. Also, the Cats placed 51 student-athletes of the TIAA-CREF Southern Conference Academic teams, which go to athletes with a 3.2 GPA or better and play in at least 50 percent of the teams' contests. Western had two Academic All-Americans in 2003-04 including Jason Whaley and Yoneko Allen. Whaley was also the recipient of an \$18,000 postgraduate scholarship from the National Football Foundation, while Allen and men's basketball player Emre Atsur were recipients of the SoCon's Mike Wood Postgraduate Scholarships.



Jason Whaley had an impressive career while playing football at Western. He was a two-time All-SoCon selection, an All-American and a first team Academic All-America. He was additionally a four-time WCU Male Student-Athlete of the Year, won an \$18,000 postgraduate scholarship from the National Football Foundation and College Hall of Fame and was recognized during the December 2003 graduation ceremonies as he ended his career with a 3.918 GPA.





DR. JOHN W. BARDO

WESTERN'S CHANCELLOR

Dr. John W. Bardo, Western Carolina University's chancellor since 1995, has propelled Western into the national spotlight as a university that is preparing students to face the challenges of the 21st century.

Since becoming the 10th chief executive officer in Western's history, Dr. Bardo has been a driving force in the university's growing

status across North Carolina and the nation as a leader in the application of the tools of technology to teaching and learning. Through his efforts, Western Carolina University has obtained National Merit Scholar status and has twice been named one of the 100 "most wired" universities by a leading Internet magazine.

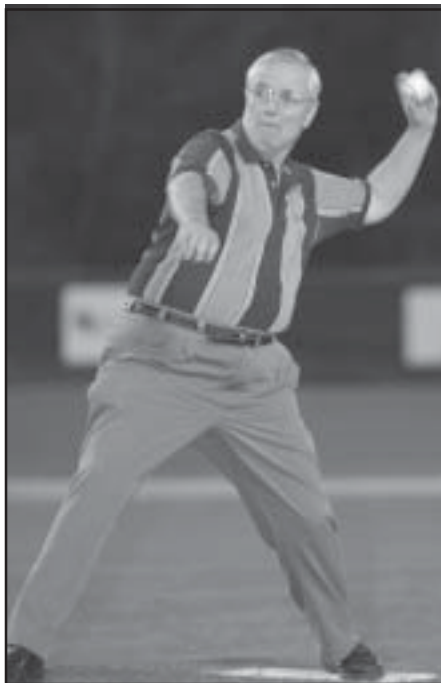
It was at Dr. Bardo's suggestion that the university's faculty, staff, student body and board of trustees began to consider the issue of whether to require incoming freshmen to have a networkable computer as a way to ensure that graduates of Western have the basic skills necessary to compete in an economy that will rely increasingly on information management. Following months of study, Western in November 1997 took the bold step of becoming the first in the University of North Carolina system to adopt such a requirement. Other UNC institutions, including UNC Chapel Hill, have since announced similar requirements.

A native of Cincinnati, Ohio, Dr. Bardo also has engineered a university wide effort to "raise the bar" of academic standards at Western. Faculty members have increased their expectations of student performance, and students are rising to meet those expectations. That emphasis on increased academic quality is earning the attention of some of North Carolina's brightest young scholars, improving the average SAT score of entering freshmen, and increasing the number of National Merit finalists and high school valedictorians interested in Western.

Other academic improvements at Western that have taken place under Dr. Bardo's watch include the creation of a broad-based assessment program of the performance of its senior-level students and the establishment of a residential Honors College for top academic performers.

Under Dr. Bardo's leadership, the university has increasingly turned its attention toward promoting economic development as a means of improving the quality of life for residents of Western North Carolina. Western's new \$8 million Center for Applied Technology is designed to address critical labor force issues facing the region by providing educational programs that will support emerging high-tech, "new economy" industries. Recently developed programs include undergraduate and graduate degrees in entrepreneurship, a degree in construction management, and approval for joint programs in electrical and computer engineering with UNC-Charlotte.

In addition, the university has formed strategic partnerships with several regional universities in the fields of biotechnology, bioinformatics and micro-optics. As construction nears completion on Western's



Dr. Bardo, Western's No. 1 sports supporter, threw out the ceremonial first pitch prior to Western's first ever home baseball night game, an upset over the 10th-ranked Clemson Tigers on Mar. 25, 2003.

\$30 million Fine and Performing Arts Center, the university has taken numerous steps to boost heritage and cultural tourism in the mountain region, including the establishment of a new performance series of music and art.

Prior to his appointment at Western, Dr. Bardo had been vice president for academic affairs at Bridgewater State College in Massachusetts since 1990. He assumed the dual role of provost of the public institution in 1993. Like Western Carolina, Bridgewater State was founded in the 19th century as a normal school for the training of teachers and today is a state-supported regional, comprehensive institution. Bridgewater has some 3,800 students.

Before moving to Massachusetts, Dr. Bardo held senior administrative posts at the University of North Florida in Jacksonville, serving as assistant to the president for planning and as provost and vice president for academic affairs. A sociologist, he had previously accumulated a decade of teaching and administrative experience at Southwest Texas State University and Wichita State University in Kansas.

Dr. Bardo graduated from the University of Cincinnati in 1970 with a degree in economics. He holds a master's degree in sociology from Ohio University, and earned a doctorate in the field from The Ohio State University. A graduate of the Institute for Educational Management at Harvard University, he also has been a Fulbright Visiting Scholar at Monash University in Australia and a guest visiting professor at the University College of Wales at Swansea.

Dr. Bardo has written extensively and lectured widely on urban and community sociology, higher education, organizational behavior, economic development, quantitative methods, and the educational applications of technology. In 1994, he was president of the Society for Applied Multivariate Research, and he has been listed in numerous biographical reference books, including Jaycees' Outstanding Young Men in America, Directory of Distinguished Americans, Community Leaders of America, and Who's Who in America.

Dr. Bardo is currently beginning a four-term term of service on the National Collegiate Athletics Association's Minority Opportunities and Interests Committee. The 12-member committee is charged with conducting reviews of issues related to the interests of ethnic minority student-athletes, NCAA minority programs and NCAA policies that affect ethnic minorities.

Dr. Bardo and his wife, Deborah, have one son, Christopher.

WESTERN CAROLINA BOARD OF TRUSTEES

*Robert Burgin
Asheville, N.C.*

*Genevieve W. Burda
Mars Hill, N.C.*

*Rick Carlisle
Raleigh, N.C.*

*Jeanette Hyde
Raleigh, N.C.*

*Gerald Kiser
Monroe, Mich.*

*Joan G. MacNeill
Webster, N.C.*

*William Ted Phillips, Jr.
Knoxville, Tenn.*

*J. Clark Plexico
Raleigh, N.C.*

*Phillip D. Walker
Hickory, N.C.*

*Steve Warren
Asheville, N.C.*

*Charles Worley
Asheville, N.C.*

*Rosemary Wyche
Raleigh, N.C.*

*Heather Christine List
(Student Govt. Assoc.
President)*





CHIP SMITH

WESTERN CAROLINA DIRECTOR OF ATHLETICS

Western Carolina Chancellor John W. Bardo announced on Aug. 23, 2004 the selection of Chip Smith as the Catamounts' Director of Athletics. Smith comes to Western after two years as athletics director at Morehead State University.

Formerly director of athletics at Eastern Kentucky University, Smith also has held positions at Virginia Military Institute, UNC Charlotte and University of North Carolina.

"This opportunity to join Western Carolina University at such an important time in its history is an honor. I couldn't be more excited to be a part of the enthusiasm surrounding the university and Catamount athletics," he said. "Dr. Bardo is a dynamic leader who has energized the campus. I look forward to working with him and the entire campus community to continue the strides toward excellence in athletics and throughout the university."

A native of Greensboro who was raised in Siler City, Smith earned his bachelor's degree in education at North Carolina in 1978, where he played football for four years under legendary coach Bill Dooley. In 1989, he earned his master's degree in athletics administration at North Carolina as well.

He began his career in athletics as a high school teacher and coach, first at Hickory High School and then at Garinger High School in Charlotte. He worked as ticket manager for the Durham Bulls baseball club before joining the Educational Foundation Inc. at North Carolina in 1983 as assistant to the executive

director of the athletics fund-raising organization also known as the Rams Club.

Smith was a member of the athletics department administration at UNC Charlotte from 1984 though 1991, first as business and ticket manager, then as assistant athletic director for development. He joined the staff of Southern Conference member VMI in 1991 as assistant athletics director, advancing to associate athletics director. He joined the administration at Eastern Kentucky University in 1999, rising to the position of director of athletics in 2001. He has served as director of athletics at Morehead State since August 2002.



DR. H. GIBBS KNOTTS

WESTERN CAROLINA FACULTY ATHLETICS REPRESENTATIVE

Dr. Gibbs Knotts accepted the Chancellor's appointment to become the next Faculty Athletics Representative for the Athletics Department in the spring of 2003.

Knotts had an eventful year in his first term as FAR. Not only did he represent Western and the Southern Conference in his role as FAR, but, for the 2003-04 academic year, Knotts was honored by the University as recipient of the Chancellor's Distinguished Teaching Award.

Knotts has a very impressive academic and athletic background. He is originally from Shiloh High School in Lithonia, Ga., where he won seven individual state championships in AA and AAAA competition. He additionally was a member of two team state championship teams.

Knotts attended North Carolina from 1989-1993, where he ran cross country and indoor/outdoor track, earning three varsity letters. He competed in the 1991 NCAA Cross Country Championships and his team won the 1992 ACC Outdoor Track and Field Championships. Knotts graduated Phi Beta Kappa at UNC and won several prestigious scholar athlete awards including the ACC's James H. Weaver Post-Graduate Scholarship, the top academic honor given to a student-athlete in the ACC.

He put his past running experience to use in December of 2001 when he was selected to be a Olympic Flame Torchbarer as the flame made its way through Asheville to Salt Lake City for the 2002 Winter Olympics. Without his knowledge, Knotts' wife, Stacy, submitted his name along with 210,000 hopefuls. Knotts was selected to be one of 11,500 to actually carry the torch as the Olympic committee picked him for his overcoming obstacles after being in a car accident.

Knotts is currently an Assistant Professor in Political Science and Public Affairs and the Director of the MPA Program. He received his M.A. and Ph.D. from Emory University in Atlanta. He is often described by colleagues and students as an active student oriented faculty member who is an excellent teacher.

Knotts and his wife Stacy are the parents of one daughter, Whitney (1).





WCU ATHLETICS DEPARTMENT



FRED CANTLER
Senior Associate AD/
Internal Affairs



DEBBIE HENSLEY
Assistant AD/
Sr. Woman Administrator



MIKE CAWOOD
Assistant AD/
Media Relations



STEVEN HERREN
Assistant AD/
External Relations



DR. JENNIFER BROWN
Dir. of Academic Support
Services for Student-Athletes



KIM JAMISON
Secretary



CHERYL PLEMMONS
Administrative Assistant/
Business Manager



BILL RICHTER
Director of Athletic Development



AIME MITCHELL
Ticket Manager



DANIEL HOOKED
Director of Media Relations

CATAMOUNT HEAD COACHES



TODD RALEIGH
Baseball



STEVE SHURINA
Men's Basketball



KELLIE HARPER
Women's Basketball



KIM CHERRY
Cheerleading



KENT BRIGGS
Football



JOHNNY WIKE
Men's Golf



STEVE LOTT
Women's Golf



DEBBIE HENSLEY
Soccer



MEGAN SMITH
Softball



JAN STUBBS
Tennis



ANGELL BENSON
Volleyball



DANNY WILLIAMSON
Men's & Women's Cross
Country/
Indoor & Outdoor Track and
Field





ATHLETICS DEPARTMENT DIRECTORY (828)

Director of Athletics	227-7338
Baseball	227-2022
Basketball (Men's)	227-2019
Basketball (Women's)	227-2031
Cross Country	227-2026
Football	227-7395
Golf (Men's)	227-3794
Golf (Women's)	227-3797
Media Relations	227-2339/2336
Soccer (Women's)	227-2391
Softball	227-2532
Tennis (Women's)	227-2338
Ticket Office	227-2401
Track & Field	227-2026
Training Room	227-2043
Volleyball	227-2032
Weight Room	227-3792



For more information, contact:
BOYCE DEITZ
 (828) 227-2112
 Cats W Club
 WCU Athletics • Ramsey Center
 Cullowhee, NC 28723



*If you are a former
 Catamount Student-Athlete...
WE NEED YOU!*

It is the desire of the Cats W Club to maintain and enhance fellowship between individuals who participated in Catamount Athletics. Our goal is to promote the reunion of former athletes and teammates. This organization is designed to create fun, not to raise funds.

WCU INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS ROLE AND MISSION

The Department of Athletics at Western Carolina University is an integral program of the institution and exists solely to complement the central University mission of teaching and learning. The University seeks to create a community of scholarship in which the activities of its members are consistent with the highest standards of knowledge and practice in their disciplines. The athletics program reflects this commitment to highest standards and shares the responsibility of achieving the goals of the University.

The activities of the athletics program provide an environment in which student, coaches, faculty, staff and administrators jointly assume the responsibility for the success on and off the field of play. The athletics program embraces the concept that student-athletes are first and foremost students — possessing academic goals, personal interests, and vocational ambitions not unlike those of any other student. The athletics program complements other University programs by enhancing the educational, social, career and athletic opportunities of the students who participate in athletics. This environment also fosters a commitment to high standards of personal and professional conduct by all members of the athletic community manifested in the highest level of sportsmanship.

Western Carolina University is committed to ensuring equitable participation and treatment of men and women of all races and ethnic origins. The athletics program actively promotes an environment in which fair and equitable distribution of athletic opportunities, benefits, and resources are available to all athletics program participants, and in which any person is free from discrimination.

The athletics program provides significant contributions to the University by enhancing loyalty to the alma mater, strengthening the pride and enthusiasm of alumni, fostering a strong sense of community, and serving as a positive public relations tool for the University.





HISTORY OF THE CATAMOUNT NICKNAME

Western Carolina University's unique mascot and nickname for its athletics teams seem to always bring about the same question when the Western plays on the road ... "What is a Catamount?"

Webster's Dictionary defines "catamount" as "any of various wild cats such as a cougar or lynx." Cats of the catamount variety, including the bobcat, roam the southern Appalachian Mountains where Western Carolina University is located.

The nickname evolved from a contest that was held on the Cullowhee campus in 1933. The school was called Western Carolina Teachers College at that time and its teams were known as the Teachers.

Everyone on campus was invited to participate, and the usual names were suggested—Bears, Indians, Panthers. However, the college wanted an unusual name, a name that few others had and that everyone would not copy.

The contest came down to Mountain Boomers, a small ground squirrel that scampers about the woods and is extremely difficult to catch, and Catamounts. Catamounts was the favorite of Head Football Coach C.C. Poindexter and was the nickname chosen. Poindexter wanted his players to be Catamounts with "fierce spirit, savage attacks, and lightning quick moves."

Western Carolina University is the only football-playing school in the nation using the nickname "Catamounts" with the University of Vermont being the only other school playing under that nickname.



WCU ATHLETICS HALL OF FAME

Western Carolina University's Athletics Hall of Fame was established in 1990 to recognize the outstanding accomplishments of former student-athletes, coaches and administrators. Inductees are selected by a 10-member committee composed of representatives from the university's alumni association, former athletes association, faculty athletics committee, administration, athletics department, the Catamount Club and area media. Listed below are the WCU Athletics Hall of Fame members who are a part of the Catamount Basketball program.

Ronnie Carr <i>(Men's Basketball, 1980-83)</i> Inducted in 1999	Jim Hartbarger <i>(Head Men's Basketball Coach, 1969-75)</i> Inducted in 2000	Ronald Rogers <i>(Men's Basketball, 1950-53)</i> Inducted in 1990
Greg Dennis <i>(Men's Basketball, 1979-82)</i> Inducted in 1997	Tommy Lavelle <i>(Men's Basketball, 1961-64)</i> Inducted in 2000	Danny Tharpe <i>(Baseball, Men's Basketball and Football, 1960-64)</i> Inducted in 1991
Mel Gibson <i>(Men's Basketball, 1960-63)</i> Inducted in 1992	Henry Logan <i>(Men's Basketball, 1965-68)</i> Inducted in 1990	Thomas "Bubba" Wilson <i>(Men's Basketball, 1975-78)</i> Inducted in 2002
Odell Griffin <i>(Men's Basketball, 1939-40)</i> Inducted in 1992	Bob McGinn <i>(Men's Basketball, 1947-50)</i> Inducted in 1992	Greg Wittman <i>(Basketball, 1966-69)</i> Inducted in 1994
Jim Gudger <i>(Baseball, Men's Basketball and Football Player; Head Men's Basketball Coach and Head Baseball Coach, 1940-69)</i> Inducted in 1990	Bruce Peterson <i>(Football, Men's Basketball and Tennis, 1960-64)</i> Inducted in 2001	1962-63 Men's Basketball Team <i>(Played for the NAIA Championship)</i> Inducted in 2003
	Harris Pryor <i>(Baseball and Men's Basketball, 1956-59)</i> Inducted in 1994	

THE SOUTHERN CONFERENCE

The Southern Conference, in its 84th season of intercollegiate competition for 2004-05 year, has become known as one of the nation's leaders in emphasizing the development of the student-athlete and defining the league's role in helping to build lifelong leaders and role models.

The Southern Conference has excelled as the premier Division I-AA football conference since earning that classification in 1981. The Conference currently consists of 12 members in five states throughout the Southeast and sponsors 19 varsity sports and championships that produce participants for NCAA Championships.

The Southern Conference is the nation's fourth oldest NCAA Division I collegiate athletic association. Only the Big Ten (1896), the Missouri Valley (1907), and the Pac-10 (1915) conferences are older in terms of origination.

Throughout its history, the Southern Conference has been an innovator in college athletics. The SoCon was the first "super conference" with its charter membership including the likes of Alabama, Auburn and North Carolina. The SoCon, as it has come to be known by headline writers throughout the country, is the league that gave birth to the 3-point shot in college basketball when Western's Ronnie Carr hit the first trey on Nov. 29, 1980. The SoCon was also the college home of such sporting greats as Arnold Palmer, Jerry West, the late Charlie "Choo Choo" Justice and Dick Groat.

Academic excellence has been a major part of the Southern Conference's tradition. League athletes have been recognized countless times on Verizon/CoSIDA Academic All-America and district teams. Eighteen Rhodes-Scholar winners have been selected from the conference.

The Southern Conference, whose office has been located in Spartanburg, S.C. since 2002, was formed on February 25, 1921 at a meeting in Atlanta, Ga. Fourteen institutions from the 30-member Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Association (SIAA) reorganized as the Southern Conference. Those charter members included Alabama, Auburn, Clemson, Georgia, Georgia Tech, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi State, North Carolina, North Carolina State, Tennessee, Virginia, Virginia Tech and Washington & Lee. Athletic competition began in the fall of 1921.

In 1922, six more schools Florida, Louisiana State, Mississippi, South Carolina, Tulane and Vanderbilt joined the fold. A year later, the University of the South joined the ranks. Virginia Military Institute became a member in 1924 and Duke University came into the league in 1928.

Since then, conference membership has experienced a series of changes with 43 institutions having been affiliated with the league. The league has undergone two major transitions during its history.

The first occurred in December 1932 when the Southeastern Conference was formed out of the 23-school Southern Conference. The league's 13 members west and south of the Appalachian Mountains reorganized to help reduce the extensive travel demands that were present in the league at the time. In 1936, the Southern Conference invited The Citadel, William & Mary, Davidson, Furman, Richmond and Wake Forest to join the membership.

The second major shift happened in 1953 when Clemson, Duke, Maryland, North Carolina, North Carolina State, South Carolina and Wake Forest officially withdrew from the league to form the Atlantic Coast Conference.

Today, the league continues to thrive with a membership that spans four Southeastern states. Current league members are Appalachian State, College of Charleston, The Citadel, Davidson, East Tennessee State, Elon, Furman, Georgia Southern, UNC Greensboro, Chattanooga, Western Carolina and Wofford. UNC Wilmington is an associate member in the sport of softball.

